



City of Los Angeles

Department of Animal Services

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Message from General Manager

Dear Angelenos,

Last night, Mayor Eric Garcetti announced the temporary closures of the West Valley and North Central Animal Service Centers, stating:

"In order to continue providing excellent care for our City's animals during the COVID-19 crisis and safety precautions for our employees, beginning on Monday, April 13th, the LA Animal Services department (LAAS) will close its West Valley and North Central Animal Services Centers. The animals in these two centers will be moved to one of the four that will remain open: East Valley, Harbor, Chesterfield Square, and West Los Angeles.

Fortunately, because of the incredible response from the LA community, many people have stepped up to foster or adopt animals - last month, the department placed 307 animals in foster care; found new homes for 919 others; returned 254 animals to their owners and placed 752 with LAAS rescue partners.

While there is currently a long list of people wishing to foster, LAAS hopes you will consider adoption. If you would like to adopt a pet, please visit the website at laanimalservices.com/adopt or call 888-452-7381 and have the Animal ID# ready. If you'd like to move forward in the process to adopt, LAAS will guide you through the application over the phone and can schedule an in-person pick-up appointment between the hours of 11 am to 4 pm at one of the open centers."

This may seem alarming for some community members but know that much thought and consideration were made prior to this decision based on our strong commitment to saving animals' lives and to keeping our staff as safe as possible.

During the Mayor's briefing, he also reported that in the month March, because of the amazing LA community, and the efforts of our dedicated staff, you helped us get 2,232 animals out of our shelters and into foster homes, homes of their own, and reunited pets

to their owners. I am very grateful for the outpouring of support we continue to receive from the community.

Recommendation to Reduce our Animal Service Centers' Population

Even during these unprecedented times, people care deeply about lost and abandoned animals and will act to save animals' lives. LAAS has been attending weekly ZOOM meetings and operating in compliance with recommendations from experts:

- UC Davis Koret Shelter Medicine Program
<https://www.sheltermedicine.com/library/resources/?r=animal-services-role-in-covid-19-support>
- Coronavirus (COVID-19) – National Animal Control Association
<https://www.nacanet.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/NACA-Statement-on-Animal-Control-Functions-During-the-COVID-19-Pandemic.pdf>
- American Pet's Alive COVID-19 Animal Shelter Preparedness Guide
<https://sites.google.com/americanpetsalive.org/ampa-covid19/home?authuser=0>

Essential Services we Offer during COVID19

Since "Safer at Home", LAAS continues to:

- Conduct adoptions and fostering by appointment,
- Reunite lost pets with their families,
- Partner with three major cat rescue organizations to take the underage kittens who need bottle feeding
- Take in the sick and injured animals that our Officers pick up, pets whose owner has died leaving them alone, and pets whose owner lives alone and is too sick to care for them.

Our Officers also continue to respond to people and pets in danger.

Why have we reduced our Animal Services Center population and why have we temporarily reduced some services deemed to be non-essential by experts?

LAAS, by comparison, is a smaller LA City Department. We have 348 employees and several vacancies that we have not been able to fill. Of the 348 employees, 80 are currently off due to COVID-19 and non-COVID-19 related matters. Our Team has approximately 35 Administrative staff (ITA, Public Relations, Licensing, Accounting, CPRA Requests, Contracts, Hearings, Staff to Commission, Executive Assistant, etc.) leaving us with 233 staff in the Field (Officers, canvassers, etc.) and in our Animal Services Centers, which include veterinarians and RVTs (Registered Veterinary Technicians) who work alongside our Animal Care Technicians (ACT) and Animal Care Technician Supervisors (ACT) who work directly with the public in our Centers. This

team is also responsible to conduct animal cruelty investigations, pick up sick or injured animals, and to keep people and pets safe.

If one or more persons on staff is exposed to COVID-19 or gets sick, they must go home for at least two weeks to self-quarantine and be tested. And, this could also mean that coworkers would need to be sent home to also self-quarantine to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

In short, this scenario could have resulted with an Animal Services Center full of animals with not enough staff to provide the care these animals need and deserve.

Some members of our Leadership Team spent last weekend looking at schedules and ways to create A, B and C Teams that will provide maximum safety for our staff, the animals in our Centers, and the public. As a result, LAAS Team Members displaced from West Valley and North Central shelters will be temporarily assigned to one of the other four shelters. All kennel and field staff will be working 12-hour shifts to continue 24/7 coverage. This new schedule allows us to efficiently operate our Centers and helps ensure the safety and well-being of both our staff and shelter guests. We did not have this flexibly operating all six Centers.

This is a system very similar to the way LAPD and LAFD are staffing during the pandemic. We will keep these A, B, and C groups together allowing us to continue operations if one of our Teams is exposed to COVID-19 or gets sick.

Summary

This Department knows how to stay strong during earthquakes, fires, and floods. COVID-19 is our first pandemic. Just as each fire leaves us better prepared for the next incident, what we learn from COVID-19 will better prepare us for another similar crisis. These are uncharted times but we must remain focused and at the ready during COVID-19, just as we would be in any other emergency our City faces. We are all in this together, and together, with our animal companions, we will get through this.

Keep safe, and please stay **Safer at Home**,

Brenda

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Los Angeles Department of Animal Services is one of the largest municipal shelter systems in the United States with six shelters serving approximately 60,000 animals annually and responding to 20,000 emergency calls involving an animal or person in danger. LA Animal Services promotes and protects the health, safety and welfare of animals and people.